



U.S. Department of Energy
Grand Junction, Colorado

Moab Project Information Update

November 2003

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) office in Grand Junction, Colorado, is currently preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the remediation of the former uranium ore-processing site and vicinity properties near Moab, Utah. DOE will host public meetings during the public comment period for the draft EIS (April – June 2004). This information update provides the public with an interim status report on the EIS and other activities related to the Moab Project.

Background

The Moab Project Site (formerly known as the Atlas millsite) is a former uranium ore-processing facility located about 3 miles northwest of the city of Moab in Grand County, Utah. The site is situated on the west bank of the Colorado River at the confluence with Moab Wash and is less than 1 mile from the entrance to Arches National Park (see Figures 1 and 2). The site encompasses approximately 400 acres, and includes a 130-acre uranium mill tailings pile that occupies much of the western portion.

The Moab Project Site was a privately owned facility licensed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission under Title II of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act. With the enactment of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, Congress authorized the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to manage and reclaim the facility under Title I of the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act. On October 25, 2001, DOE assumed ownership of the Moab Project Site. The DOE office in Grand Junction, Colorado, is responsible for remediation and stewardship of the site.

Environmental Impact Statement

The DOE Moab Project Team is currently preparing an *Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS) that will present a detailed evaluation of proposed on-site and off-site alternatives for permanent stabilization or remediation of the Moab Project Site uranium mill tailings pile. The scope of the alternatives also includes cleanup and remediation of the millsite property and the associated vicinity properties within the City of Moab and the Spanish Valley. The on-site alternative addresses encapsulating the existing tailings pile as a permanent, engineered, disposal cell that would contain all on-site and vicinity property contaminated material. The three

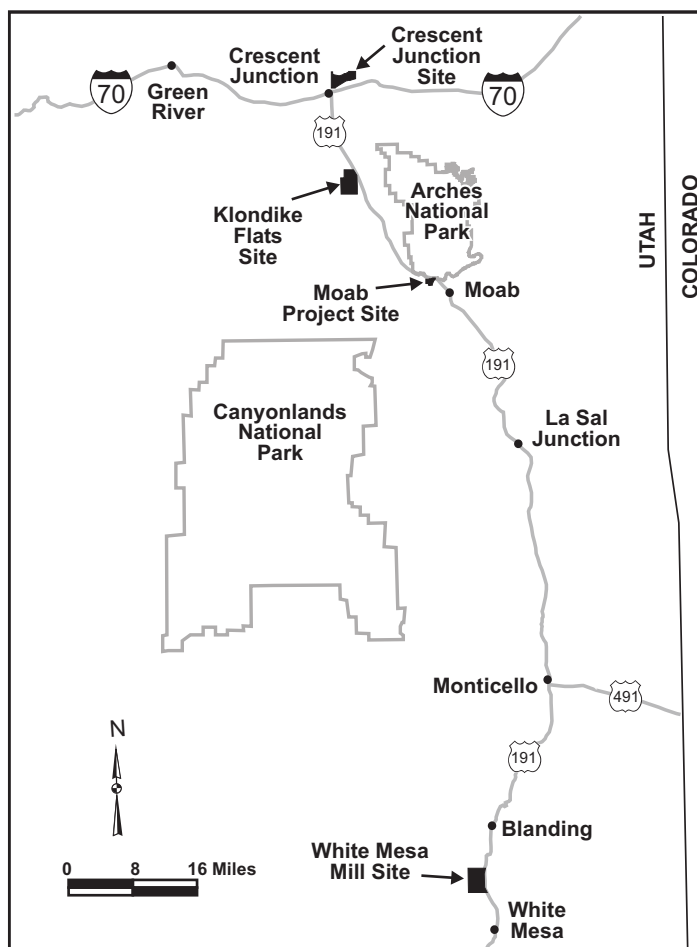


Figure 1. Moab Project Site and Proposed Off-Site Disposal Alternative Locations

off-site alternatives being evaluated are the Crescent Junction site immediately northeast of the town of Crescent Junction, Utah, and 28 miles northwest of Moab; the Klondike Flats site, just north of the Moab airport and 17 miles north of Moab; and the existing White Mesa Mill site near White Mesa and Blanding, Utah, and about 85 miles south of Moab (see Figure 1). Proposed modes of transporting the contaminated materials and construction materials include truck haul,

rail haul, and slurry pipeline. The EIS also addresses the proposed strategies for the cleanup of contaminated ground water at the site to bring it into compliance with ground water quality standards and to address the long-term protection of human health and the environment, including the Colorado River.

The following is the tentative schedule for the EIS:

Draft EIS Publication	April 2004
Draft EIS Public Comment Period	April – June 2004
Draft EIS Public Meeting	May 2004
Final EIS Publication	October 2004
Record of Decision Published	December 2004

Twelve cooperating agencies, consisting of federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, are assisting DOE in identifying all reasonable alternatives and significant environmental, social, or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternatives. DOE has established a schedule of cooperating agency interactions and will hold separate meetings with cooperating agencies. DOE is also in consultation with Native American Tribes for assistance in identifying traditional cultural properties within or near the proposed disposal site locations or the proposed transportation routes.

Site Activities

In addition to preparation of the draft EIS, the Moab Project Team has been conducting the following site operations and maintenance activities.

Dust Control/Air Monitoring

Dust blowing from the site has been a public concern. DOE is attempting to control dust at the site and has been applying a surfactant and water to the tailings pile and site soils to help eliminate dust. Air monitoring stations were installed both on and off the site to monitor radon, gamma radiation, and air particulates. Monitoring results are compiled quarterly and posted on the DOE Moab Project website at www.gjo.doe.gov/moab/moab.html.

Support of U.S. Highway 191 Remediation

During spring 2003, DOE removed approximately 4,400 cubic yards of contaminated material from the U.S. Highway 191 right-of-way that extends along the north boundary of the Moab Project Site within the DOE property boundary. This removal was performed to eliminate contaminated material from the areas to be disturbed during Utah Department of Transportation improvements along the U.S. Highway 191 corridor this fall. The contaminated materials were stockpiled and stabilized on the Moab Project Site for future disposal with the existing tailings pile.

In September 2003, the Utah Department of Transportation began a significant road improvement program on a portion of the U.S. Highway 191 right-of-way that is outside the DOE property boundary. Moab Project Team members assisted the Utah Department of Transportation by providing on-site radiological analyses of materials removed during construction outside the DOE property boundary. Because of budget restrictions, the Utah Department of Transportation was unable to remove all the contaminated materials that exist along the highway. Approximately 1,200 cubic yards of material that exceeds U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards remain in the right-of-way. DOE will address the disposition of this contaminated material when the vicinity properties are remediated.

Tailings Dewatering

DOE continues to dewater the tailings pile at the Moab Project Site. As of October 23, 2003, more than 878,000 gallons of water had been pumped from the pile and evaporated from a lined evaporation pond. Dewatering the pile is important for both the proposed on-site and off-site remediation alternatives. For the on-site alternative, dewatering is important because it allows settling of the pile to occur before reclamation begins. For the off-site alternatives (relocation of the tailings pile), dewatering will minimize the amount of wet material that has to be handled.



Figure 2. Moab Project Site

Ground Water Interim Action

Concern has been expressed about the effects of mill-related contaminants entering the Colorado River. Elevated ammonia levels in ground water at the site are affecting river water quality in an area of critical habitat for endangered fish species. DOE conducted a ground water interim action at the site this year to address these concerns while it evaluates long-term solutions to site contamination. The purpose of the interim action is to improve water quality in the Colorado River adjacent to the site. Contaminated ground water is

being extracted before it discharges into the river and is being pumped via pipeline to a lined evaporation pond. This evaporation pond covers more than 4 acres and was constructed on top of the tailings pile outside the 100-year floodplain. The interim action system became fully operational in early September; 2 million gallons of ground water has been pumped as of late October. The ground water extraction system may eventually become part of the final ground water remedy but is not intended as a long-term activity. The effectiveness of the system will be evaluated throughout the duration of the interim action.

Information Contacts

DOE Headquarters is in the process of creating a new organization known as the Office of Legacy Management. Although some projects managed by the DOE office in Grand Junction, Colorado, will report to this new office, the Moab Project will remain under the DOE Office of Environmental Management. Because of this reorganization, some of the Moab Project Team members in Grand Junction (2597 B3/4 Road, Grand Junction, CO 81503) have changed. The Moab Project Team now consists of the following DOE staff members and contractor support staff.

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Additional information updates will be provided as DOE deems appropriate prior to the release of the draft EIS for public comment. Project documents are available on the DOE Moab Project website at

www.gjo.doe.gov/moab/moab.html and at the Moab Project Public Reading Rooms in the following locations:

Grand County Library

25 South 100 East, Moab, Utah

(435) 259-5421

Library hours:

9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturday

Closed Sunday

Blanding Branch Library

25 West 300 South, Blanding, Utah

(435) 678-2335

Library hours:

Noon to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday

2:00 to 6:00 p.m. Friday

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Saturday

White Mesa Ute Administrative Building

(off Highway 191), White Mesa, Utah

(435) 678-3397

Library hours:

8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

Closed Saturday and Sunday

Questions or comments can be submitted to moabcomments@gjo.doe.gov or call toll free at 1-800-637-4575.

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